

Fourteen-year-old Eliza thinks the world is ending. Peter, the young and charming father she babysits for, thinks that that's just what being a teenager feels like, and maybe he's right. But that won't break the late October heat wave, or stop the moths from gathering in Eliza's hair-- and it certainly won't put an end to the nightmares.

*Eliza's adolescence-- and Peter's adulthood-- are both shaped by climate anxiety; religious existentialism; the failures and successes of the Me Too movement; the ways in which domesticity and dystopia can become indistinguishable from one another. A conversation unfolding in real time, COOL is a story that asks what it means to come of age in **this** age.*

About COOL

COOL is a real-time, two-hander play that takes place somewhere in Southern Ontario, in the midst of a heat wave that's left the late October air sticky and stale. It's late at night, and fourteen-year-old Eliza is waiting for her mother to pick her up from her baby-sitting gig. Peter, the thirty-year-old father she works for was supposed to drive her home, but he had a couple drinks at dinner. The two of them wait together on the veranda, discussing the weather, their families, the end of the world.

After years of percolating ideas around everything from apocalypticism to the Me Too movement to the strange and gendered labour of baby-sitting, I began writing COOL in late 2019. I had joined Playwrights' Workshop Montreal's Young Creator's Unit, where I received mentorship, dramaturgical support and input from my peers in the YCU cohort. Then, of course, the pandemic hit, and I finished the first draft (and all subsequent drafts) during lockdown. It felt fitting for a show about two young people who feel crushed under the weight of impending apocalypse, but at the same time, it really sucked.

About Megan Hunt

I am an Ontario-born, Montreal-based writer, editor and theatre creator. In the midst of the first lockdown in 2020, I completed both PWM's Young Creator's Unit and my Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing from Concordia University.

During my time at Concordia, I had been active in student arts circles, seeing some poetry, short fiction and journalism published in mostly campus-based outlets, and having my playwriting work presented in student festivals and reading events (the first fully staged production of my work was slated for the 2020 McGill Theatre Festival, which was supposed to take place in March 2020. I'm sure you can guess what ended up happening). Although writing has always been my primary passion-- or maybe because of this-- after graduating I felt a little bit stifled as

a writer. I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and find new ways to tell stories and support projects outside writing.

In the nearly three years since graduation, on top of my freelance writing, I have been a political fundraiser, a Programming Coordinator for the Book and Periodical Council, a Communications Coordinator for Driftwood Theatre, a workshop facilitator for Playwrights' Workshop Montreal and currently, an Editorial Assistant for a university press. Although it might seem a little all over the map, my versatility and broad interests have served to be some of my strongest assets as a writer and storyteller.

I also have OCD, something I think about a lot but rarely write about directly. Instead, I find that much of my work serves as an allegorical exploration of the condition. I often think about OCD as a struggle to maintain a sense of balance, a sort of tight-rope walk to contain threats that are not visible or tangible, but very real nonetheless. In many ways, COOL began to truly take form when I explored the relationship between obsession and apocalyptic thought, and considering other threats many of us encounter that may seem invisible or intangible: climate anxiety, social ostracization, navigating relationships with lopsided power dynamics.

In many ways, the revelations of the Me Too movement also inspired COOL. Following the prominence of Me Too was a wave of artwork, commentary and media hinging around the ideas of sexual misconduct and abuse of power. However, many works focused on clear, unmistakable instances of abuse, often with unambiguous perpetrators and victims. COOL is a project that rejects this simplicity, and instead embraces the nuance of Eliza and Peter's relationship. It's a project that not only posits that we are capable of empathizing with those we are critical of, it posits that we *must* empathize with those we are critical of.

The Future Of COOL

COOL is simply a project that needs to be staged, complete with surreal, melting scenery, thousands of moths that act in some ways like a chorus, and at its heart, a complicated dynamic that can only truly be conveyed by actors who reflect the ages of their characters. It's been a long time coming, and after a creation process that's primarily taken place over Google Docs and Zoom, I know the next step for this project is to find collaborators who want to see this story staged as much as I do.